

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 IO-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 EB-04

DRC-01 ACDA-05 SAJ-01 NIC-01 /078 W

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R 160933Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0772

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

CINCLANT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 4456

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PO

SUBJ: VITOR ALVES ON SITUATION IN PORTUGAL

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: MINISTOR VITOR ALVES REQUESTS STRONG EXPRESSION OF  
SUPPORT BY US DURING COSTA GOMES VISIT TO US; SAYS GOP WANTS  
GOOD RELATIONS WITH US; ALVES SUPPORTS NATO AND SAYS PRESIDENT DOES  
TOO; CAUTIONED AGAINST PLACING LABELS ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN  
PORTUGAL BECAUSE EVEN ALVES DID NOT KNOW WHAT OUTCOME WOULD BE;  
EMPHASIZED THAT AFM WAS IN ONTROL WITH HIMSELF, ANTUNES,  
AND PM THE PRIME DECISION-MAKERS; SAID IT WOULD BE LONG TIME  
BEFORE CIVILIAN ELEMENT WOULD BE PREPARED AND ABLE ASSUME  
COMMAND OF NATION, ALTHOUGH HE FORESAW ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE  
IN SPRING; SAID CUNHAL HAD MINIMAL INFLUENCE WITHIN GOVERNMENT;  
AND DESCRIBED GONCALVES AS DEFINITE LEFTIST, PROGRESSIVE  
HUMANIST, BUT INCAPABLE OF BEING A COMMUNIST. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE ON OCT 12 BETWEEN FSO PETER DE VOS WHO WAS VISITING PORTUGAL AND WHO HAD KNOWN AFM LEADER MAJOR VITOR ALVES WELL WHEN BOTH WERE ASSIGNED IN ANGOLA. ALVES' VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT HE ALONG WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FELLOW MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO MELO ANTUNES ARE THE KEY FIGURES IN GUIDING BOTH THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE AFM AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

2. US ASSISTANCE  
ALVES SAID THAT ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL ELEMENTS WHICH PORTUGAL NEEDED AT THIS TIME IS US ASSISTANCE. RESPONDING TO AN INQUIRY AS TO WHAT SORT OF US ASSISTANCE HE HAD IN MIND, HE SAID THAT WHAT WAS NOW ESSENTIAL--EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN MATERIAL OR FINANCIAL AID--WAS THE FIRM, BUT APPROPRIATELY SUBTLE, ENDORSEMENT OF THE NEW REGIME IN PORTUGAL BY THE US. ALVES IMPLIED THIS UNEQUIVOCAL STAMP OF APPROVAL SHOULD BE DONE DURING THE COSTA GOMES VISIT.

3. RELATIONS WITH US  
ALVES SAID THAT AS LONG AS HE HAD ANY SAY IN THE MATTER, THE GOP WOULD SEEK TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US. HE EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO IMPROVE CONTACT WITH THE US EMBASSY AND COMMENTED ON HIS POSITIVE REACTIONS TO HIS CONTACTS WITH EMBOFFS.

4. NATO  
WHILE THE SUBJECT OF THE AZORES BASE DID NOT ARISE DURING CONVERSATION, ALVES COMMENTED SEVERAL TIMES THAT NATO WAS A KEY FACTOR IN PORTUGAL'S DEFENSE STRATEGY, FOR WHICH HE WAS NOW THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTER IN THE GOP. IN ADDITION TO HIS OWN PREDILECTION FOR PORTUGAL'S CONTINUANCE IN NATO, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE ELEVATION OF COSTA GOMES WAS A FAVORABLE INDICATOR IN THIS REGARD. WHILE GENERAL SPINOLA WAS NOT NECESSARILY INCLINED TOWARD NATO AND THERE HAD BEEN COMMENT AS TO PORTUGAL'S WITHDRAWAL, COSTA GOMES HAD SERVED WITH NATO AND WAS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. FOR HIS OWN PART, ALVES SAID NOW THAT HE HAD THE DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITY, HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING ON NATO  
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AFFAIRS. HE WOULD BE LEAVING AT THE END OF THE MONTH TO GO TO WEST GERMANY TO GIVE REASSURANCES ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL TO A NATO ALLY. HE MENTIONED HE WOULD BE VISITING FRANCE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE.

5. AFM AND THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
PORTUGAL TODAY, ALVES EMPHASIZED REPEATEDLY, WAS A NATION IN A STATE OF RAPID FLUX. THE PRIMARY DOMESTIC

OBJECTIVE OF THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION WAS TO STRUCTURE A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT WHEREBY ALL THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY COULD "PARTICIPATE". HE CAREFULLY WARNED AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO PLACE LABELS ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING BECAUSE HE, HIMSELF, DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE OUTCOME WOULD BE. THERE WERE MANY, AT TIMES CONFLICTING, FORCES AT WORK AND IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE SITUATION STABILIZED.

6. DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD, ALVES ADMITTED, THE POWER BASE OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS UNQUESTIONABLY THE MILITARY. HE DESCRIBED AFM AS AN AMORPHOUS COALITIONS OF OFFICERS, MOSTLY BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY IN MID-CAREER BRACKETS, WHO WERE ESSENTIALLY REFORM-MINDED HUMANISTS. THERE WAS NO FIXED STRUCTURE IN THE AFM AND NO ACCURATE HEAD COUNT, SINCE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS WERE CONSULTING DEPENDING ON THE ISSUE INVOLVED. WHILE IT WAS TRUE THAT MOST MILITARY UNITS HOLD THEIR OWN MEETINGS TO DISCUSS RELEVANT ISSUES, THERE WAS NO FORMAL CHAIN OF COMMAND WITHIN THE AFM. RATHER, THE AFM CONSISTED OF MEN WITH THE COMMON GOAL OF REFORM, ALTHOUGH THEY OFTEN DIFFERED AMONG THEMSELVES ON HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES. HE DENIGRATED THOSE WHO LABELED THE AFM AS "COMMUNIST", INSTEAD PREFERRING TO CALL IT A CHANGING BODY OF MEN INSPIRED BY THE IDEAS OF REFORM.

7. THE AFM WAS CONSULTED BY THE POLITICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (PCC) WHICH WAS USED AS A FUNNEL FOR SOUNDING OUT REACTION TO POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES OR AS A CHANNEL FOR THE MILITARY TO BRING ITS VIEWS BEFORE THE DECISION-MAKERS. THE PCC THEORETICALLY CONSISTED ONLY OF THREE ARMY OFFICERS AND TWO OFFICERS RESPECTIVELY FROM THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE; IN FACT, ALVES SAID, ADMIRAL CRESPO IN MOZAMBIQUE, PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES, MINISTER MELO ANTUNES AND HIMSELF WERE ALSO MEMBERS OF THE PCC.

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#### 8. DECISION-MAKING

IN ALVES' VIEW, THE PRINCIPAL DECISION-MAKERS WERE HIMSELF, MEO ANTUNES AND THE PRIME MINISTER. GENERAL SPINOLA AS PRESIDENT REFUSED TO ACCEPT AUTHORITY OTHER THAN HIS OWN, BEHAVING AS IF HE WERE STILL THE MILITARY COMMANDER IN GUINEA-BISSAU. THIS ATTITUDE HAD CREATED NOT ONLY ADMINISTRATIVE HAVOC, BUT REKINDLED ANTAGONISMS TO ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY IN THE HANDS OF A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL. THIS UNHAPPY SITUATION LED TO THE EVENTS OF SEPT 28 AND SPINOLA'S OUSTER AS PRESIDENT, AOTHOUGH, ALVES CLAIMED, SPINOLA REMAINS VERY MUCH A PART OF THE AFM.

9. THERE HAVE EXISTED CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION IN THE AFM, AT TIMES WITHIN THE PCC AND ON OCCASION AMONG GONCALVES, MELO ANTUNES AND HIMSELF, ALVES SAID. IF DIFFERENCES WERE IRRECONCILABLE, CONFIDENTIAL

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THEY WERE CARRIED TO COSTA GOMES, WHO POSSESSED AN ENORMOUS CAPACITY TO RECONCILE, WHICH ACCORDING TO ALVES, UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS WAS THE GREATEST ATTRIBUTE THE PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE IN ADDITION TO THE PRESTIGE AND RESPECT HE ENJOYED AS A MILITARY LEADER. THE ULTIMATE DECISION-MAKING WAS LEFT WITH THE GONCALVES-ALVES-MELO ANTUNES TROIKA, HOWEVER. ONCE THE BASIC POLICY WAS ESTABLISHED, THEN IT WAS TURNED OVER TO THE RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH THE BUREAUCRACY.

10. ELECTIONS AND COMMUNISM

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, ALVES SAID THAT THE MILITARY EVENTUALLY HOPED TO TURN BACK THE REINS OF POWER TO THE CIVILIANS, AND THE ELECTIONS PROPOSED FOR THE SPRING OF NEXT YEAR WOULD BE THE INITIAL STEP IN THE PROCESS. HE FURTHER NOTED THAT THE FIRST ELECTIONS WOULD BE A PRELIMINARY INDICATION OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT WITH REGARD TO THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION, THROUGH THE POLITICAL PARTIES. WHEN CHALLENGED, HOWEVER, ALVES AGREED THAT IN ESSENCE THERE WAS ONLY ONE POLITICAL PARTY, THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP), CAPABLE OF ORGANIZING AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN. HE FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WHILE DISCLAIMING ANY POLITICAL PRETENSION FOR HIMSELF, HE WOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE CIVILIAN ELEMENT WOULD BE "PREPARED AND ABLE" TO ASSUME COMMAND OF THE NATION.

11. BECAUSE THE MILITARY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE STABILIZING FACTOR IN PORTUGAL FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD, ALVES DISCLAIMED THE IDEA THAT THE COUNTRY WAS RIPE FOR A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER. HE SAID PCP LEADER CUNHAL WAS A GOVERNMENT MINISTER TO SATISFY THE NEED FOR NOMINAL COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION, BUT ALVES SAID THAT CUNHAL EXERCISED A MINIMAL INFLUENCE WITHIN THE GOP, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE LOST HIS POSITION AS COORDINATOR FOR LABOR AFFAIRS. HE DENIED CATEGORICALLY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ATTACHED TO ANY IDEOLOGY, DESCRIBING HIM AS A "DEFINITE LEFTIST" IN THE SENSE THAT HE WAS A PROGRESSIVE HUMANIST DESIROUS OF BRINGING CHANGE. ALVES ADDED THAT GONCALVES IS INCAPABLE OF BEING A COMMUNIST BECAUSE HE WAS INCAPABLE OF LYING--HE MAY HAVE SPOKEN ON OCCASION IN AN IMPASSIONED MANNER, BUT ALWAYS SINCERELY AND DIRECTLY FROM THE HEART. "TRUTH IS THE PRIME MINISTER'S ONLY IDEOLOGY".  
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12. COMMENT: ALVES' STATEMENTS COULD REPRESENT A SELF-SERVING EFFORT TO LULL THE U.S. INTO A STATE OF FALSE SECURITY ABOUT THE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL. HE COULD, HOWEVER, BE TELLING THE TRUTH, AND INDEED NOTHING IN HIS PRESENTATION CONFLICTS WITH OBSERVED FACT. THIS LATTER POSSIBILITY UNDERSCORES THE NEED TO WITHHOLD JUDGEMENT ON THE POST-SEPTEMBER 28 REGIME UNTIL THAT REGIME'S ACTIONS HAVE GIVEN CLEARER SIGNALS THAN ARE NOW AVAILABLE CONCERNING ITS POLITICAL ORIENTATION.  
SCOTT

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